



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE  
BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**September 25, 2019**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on September 25, 2019 at 6 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

**ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Michael O’Neill; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran; and student representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman; and Dr. Lorna Rivera.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: September 11, 2019

Grants for Approval Totaling \$1,372,379

<b>Amount</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Sites</b>
\$449,000	2020	Capital Skills Grant	New	Madison Park
\$10,000	2020	Early College Planning Grant	New	Madison Park
\$6,868	2020	Early Grades Literacy Program	New	Condon, Curley
\$756,511	2020	Junior Reserve Officers Training Corp (JROTC)	New	East Boston High, CASH, Excel, Burke, Madison Park, O’Bryant
\$150,000	2020	PlayBall!	New	~23 sites districtwide

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BPS Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) Membership PowerPoint

Athletics: MIAA Membership Application Equity Impact Statement

Memo from Avery Esdaile, director of Athletics, to Boston School Committee re: MIAA Follow Up Questions, September 20, 2019

The General Court of Massachusetts Joint Committee on Education Student Opportunity Act Fact Sheet, September 19, 2019

The General Court of Massachusetts Joint Committee on Education Student Opportunity Act Question and Answer, September 19, 2019

Teacher Leadership Fund PowerPoint

Teacher Leadership Fund Equity Impact Statement

The BPS/BTU Teacher Leadership Fund 2019 Awarded Grants

Teacher Leadership Fund: A Grant Opportunity for BTU Educators

Action Grants: Criteria and Look Fors; Study Grants: Criteria and Look Fors

Memo from Members of the Jointly Appointed Teacher Leadership Fund Committee, to Superintendent Tommy Chang and BTU President Jessica Tang re: Awards Decisions and Process Reflections

2019 State Assessment and Accountability Results PowerPoint

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Loconto called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. He announced that interpretation services were available in Spanish.

Mr. Loconto announced the recent passing of Ms. Oliver-Dávila's father, Mary Sheffield, a retired BPS teacher and mother-in-law of Chief Operating Officer John Hanlon, and Eileen Nash, a long-time BPS educator who served as Deputy Superintendent for Individualized Learning and as principal of the Beethoven-Ohrenberger Elementary School in West Roxbury. He extended his sympathy of behalf of the Committee and called for a moment of silence in their memory.

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The Superintendent expressed her condolences at the recent passing of Rev. Michael Haynes, for whom the Haynes Early Education Center is named. Rev. Haynes was a state representative, teacher, and pastor emeritus at the Twelfth Baptist Church.

Mr. Loconto welcomed back student representative Evelyn Reyes.

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 11, 2019**

**Approved** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the September 11, 2019 School Committee meeting.

### **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

The Superintendent addressed the following topics in her oral report:

- The Superintendent attended a meeting of the Boston Private Industry Council earlier that day and participated in a Question and Answer session with students.
- She attended the annual Boston Teachers Union Back to School Book Fair on September 21<sup>st</sup>
- October is College Month at BPS; the 8th annual Citywide College, Career, & Internship Fair will take place at the Reggie Lewis Center on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup>
- The Nathan Hale Elementary School in Roxbury and Winship Elementary School in Brighton were designated “Schools of Recognition” by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- The William Channing Elementary School in Hyde Park has exited Turnaround status
- DESE will conduct a review of BPS beginning in late October
- Budget/Promise Act
- Since the start of school, the Superintendent has visited 24 schools, bringing her total number of school visits to 42 school.
- Since the start of school, the Superintendent has hosted or attended 7 community meetings, for a total of 42 community meetings.
- The Superintendent’s Inclusionary Working Group met on September 23<sup>rd</sup>
- The ISEE Exam will be administered to 6th graders on November 7
- Terra Nova testing will continue to be offered to 3rd grade students, made optional for 4th and 5th grade students
- The Superintendent is no longer mandating end of course exams, optional for school leaders
- Transportation Update: Steady improvement since the beginning of the school year. On time performance is approximately 81% in the morning and approximately 82% in the afternoon, which is an increase of 14% and 9% respectively since the first week of school; 96% of buses arrive within 15 mins of their planned arrival time and 99% within 30 minutes of planned arrival.

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- The Superintendent has retained an expert on school transportation to conduct a review of BPS transportation infrastructure. Michael Turza is a retired senior-level manager who brings 30 years of expertise to this work. He will consult with the district to identify where our systems need to be improved. He retired in 2015 after a distinguished career spanning decades with the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Public Schools - a district serving more than 80-thousand students in 169 schools. Mr. Turza comes highly recommended by the Council of the Great City Schools, which will also be providing support and technical assistance to the review.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Superintendent for her keen focus on improving transportation and for bringing in an outside expert. He applauded the district's focus on re-engaging chronically absent students and encouraged the district to improve communication with parents whose children are chronically absent. Mr. O'Neill thanked the Superintendent for engaging with parents who testified at the September 11<sup>th</sup> School Committee meeting. He also congratulated Channing Elementary School Principal Carline Pignato and her staff for leading the school out of Turnaround status.

Ms. Robinson asked about turnout at the Superintendent's community engagement tour. The Superintendent said that the community conversations have been well attended, featuring robust dialogue.

Mr. Tran asked details about the transportation consultant. The Superintendent explained that Mr. Turza will work with BPS for a year to see results.

Mr. Loconto thanked Ms. Robinson for volunteering to serve on the District Wellness Council. He provided a brief update on an international trip recently approved the Committee, in which students from Boston Latin School traveled to Moscow to compete in the Fourth Olympiad of Metropolises. Two BLS students earned bronze medals for the physics portion of the STEM-based annual international competition.

**Approved** - The Committee approved the Superintendent's Report by unanimous consent.

Ms. Reyes provided a brief update on the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)'s 2019-2020 recruitment efforts. The strategy revolves around communication to school leaders and staff, school visits, presentations to students, meetings with Academic Superintendents, and professional development presentations to headmasters. Outreach included details about student engagement and leadership opportunities such as BSAC, Student Government, School Site Council, GBR SAC, and the new Superintendent Student Executive Cabinet.

Ms. Reyes encouraged headmasters of the following schools that do not currently have representation on BSAC to connect with the organizations:

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- Margarita Muniz Academy
- East Boston High
- Excel High
- Community Academy
- Community Academy of Science and Health
- TechBoston Academy
- Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers

BSAC will hold its first meeting of the 2019-2020 School Year on Monday, September 30<sup>th</sup>.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Boston City Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George testified regarding the hiring of mental health professionals.

David Nave, former BPS parent, testified regarding his son's experience in BPS.

Travis Marshall, parent, Bates Elementary School, testified in favor of distributing school fundraising dollars across schools.

Becky Quinn, teacher, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, testified regarding the value of the district's partnership with City Sprouts.

Laura Carroll, attorney representing Harbor Point Community Task Force, testified regarding the Task Force's concerns regarding a proposal by the Boys and Girls Club and the Martin Richard Foundation to build an athletic complex for community use.

Robert Jenkins, BPS alumnus and volunteer, testified regarding athletics regulations and opportunities.

Kelly Wang, parent, Josiah Quincy Elementary School, testified regarding the school's SEI Chinese program.

**ACTION ITEMS**

Ms. Robinson requested more detailed information about the Early Grades Literacy Program grant. Anu Jayanth, director of Grants and External Funding agreed to follow up.

Mr. O'Neill asked how many students participate in the Jr. ROTC program. Ms. Jayanth will follow up. He also praised the district's partnership with PlayBall, adding that he would like to see it offered to all students in grades 6-8.

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**Approved** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$1,372,379.

**Approved** – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) memberships for the Dearborn STEM Academy, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, and the BPS Alternative Schools Network.

## **REPORTS**

**Briefing on Student Opportunity Act** – Mr. Loconto extended the Committee’s deep appreciation to the Joint Committee Co-Chairs, Speaker DeLeo and President Spilka for their work toward an equitable education funding solution that serves all communities across the Commonwealth.

City of Boston Budget Director Justin Sterritt provided an update on the Student Opportunity Act. The legislation makes an unprecedented \$1.5 billion new investment in Massachusetts public education, ensuring public schools have adequate resources to provide a high-quality education to students across the state, regardless of zip code or income level. Assuming inflation, over time the bill could provide an estimated \$2.2 billion.

The Student Opportunity Act significantly helps school districts that serve high percentages of low-income students. At the same time, school districts across the Commonwealth will benefit from updates to the existing funding formula, along with increased state investment in other vital education aid programs such as transportation, school buildings and special education. These new investments, coupled with policy updates, are designed to monitor and measure progress, support effective approaches to closing opportunity gaps, and deliver results for all students.

The bill modernizes the K-12 education funding and policy landscape in four areas:

1. Fully implements the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC) to ensure that the school funding formula provides adequate and equitable funding to all districts across the state.
2. Provides additional state financial support to help public schools and communities deliver a high-quality education to every student
3. Implements policy updates designed to maximize the impact of new funding in improving student outcomes and closing opportunity gaps
4. Identifies education policy areas requiring further analysis

Mr. Sterritt urged BPS stakeholders to continue advocating for the legislation, which must still be approved by the House and Senate and signed by the Governor. He thanked BSAC for its advocacy.

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Ms. Robinson asked about the possibility of Boston recouping funding from the underfunded charter reimbursement. Mr. Sterritt explained that the Student Opportunity Act is a forward-looking bill that essentially starts with a clean slate.

Mr. O'Neill asked questions about how Boston will benefit from the legislation. Mr. Sterritt that Boston will benefit as a district that serves a large population of low-income families, although the exact figures are still unknown. He said that BPS will need to work with DESE to find alternative methods of accurately counting students living in poverty. Mr. O'Neill suggested that BPS work directly with schools to capture the data. He praised the Boston Private Industry Council and Success Boston to partnering with the district to improve college and career readiness. Mr. Loconto suggested that the district partner with the higher education community to getting accurate data and thanked former Committee member Dr. Miren Uriarte for her commitment to the issue.

Ms. Reyes asked clarifying questions about fully funding the charter reimbursement and the impact of accountability measures.

Mr. Sterritt closed by saying that if the legislation is approved by the House and Senate, it is expected to be send to the Governor for final approval in late fall or early winter.

**Teacher Leadership Fund** – Director of Professional Learning for the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) Paul Tritter, Elementary Superintendent Mary Driscoll, Director of Teacher Development Shakera Ford Walker, Curtis Guild School Teacher Ulana Ainsworth, and Carter School Teacher Kimberly Kulasekaran presented an update on the Teacher Leadership Fund (TLF). TLF was created in the 2016-2018 BTU contract when the BTU and BPS agreed to reallocate the \$300,000 dedicated to the Lead Teacher program for this purpose. The Fund is jointly governed by a committee appointed by the Superintendent and the BTU. The Committee makes all decisions by consensus.

TLF empowers educator-led innovation to address authentic classroom, school, and district challenges in service of student learning and well-being. Its mission is to:

- Create communities of educator-led innovation
- Provide diverse educators with access to resources to better serve our most marginalized students
- Celebrate, disseminate, and iterate new learning and promising practice

TLF awards grants of up to \$15,000 to teams of educators. The fund puts resources directly into the hands of educators to work toward solutions to challenges in their schools or the district, especially those challenges that impact our most marginalized students. When educators discover promising solutions, the Teacher Leadership Fund facilitates opportunities to share learning, ideas, or resources with other schools or educators who may face similar challenges. The presenters gave an overview of the program, results from year one, examples of bright spots, and possible future steps.

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Mr. Tran encouraged the TLF Committee to strengthen its outreach and engagement to bilingual educators.

Ms. Reyes asked how the projects are evaluated. Mr. Tritter explained that each team collects and shares data to demonstrate the project's impact.

Ms. Robinson asked about the sustainability of the work. The presenters said that the Committee considers sustainability when judging grant applications.

Mr. O'Neill asked about the adequacy of the TLF funding. Mr. Tritter said that the need is there and that it additional funding would always be appreciated. He explained that the TLF Committee provides thoughtful feedback to all applicants, including those who are not selected for grant awards. Mr. O'Neill suggested that the BPS finance team conduct a cost-value analysis.

Mr. Tritter closed the presentation by noting that the Teacher Leadership Fund is cited in the Fall 2019 issue of *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*.

**2019 State Assessment and Accountability Results** – Executive Director of Data and Accountability Mary Dillman presented the 2019 state assessment and accountability results. Ms. Dillman was joined by Chief of Academics Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief of Accountability Corey Harris, and Senior Analyst Monica Hogan.

The results showed that 67 percent of BPS schools demonstrated improvement over last year. The accountability designation given to BPS as a district is “making substantial progress toward targets.”

The state designated two schools in BPS as “schools of recognition” for strong growth on academic performance: the Nathan Hale Elementary School in Roxbury and the Winship Elementary School in Brighton. Fourteen schools in BPS are classified as meeting or exceeding targets over the past year, including the Hale and Winship.

The William Channing Elementary School in Hyde Park is exiting broad/comprehensive support, which was previously known as “turnaround status.” The Channing is now classified as “making substantial progress toward targets.” This marks a milestone for the school, which received the underperforming designation in 2013.

The accountability results are largely measured by student performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam in core subjects such as English language arts, math, and science, and include other factors such as chronic absenteeism and graduation rates.

The state no longer uses the numeric ranking system that was in place until 2016. DESE places schools into six descending categories:



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- Meeting or exceeding targets (14 BPS schools, or 13%)
- Substantial progress toward targets (35 BPS schools, or 34%)
- Moderate progress toward targets (11 BPS schools, or 11%)
- Limited or no progress toward targets (2 BPS schools, or 2%)
- In need of focused/targeted support (34 BPS schools, or 33%)
- In need of broad/comprehensive support (8 BPS schools, or 8%)

Across BPS, students in grades 1-8 overall met achievement targets for English language arts, math, and science, and met the target to reduce chronic absenteeism, while the lowest-performing 25 percent of students exceeded the target for math achievement. In grades 9-12, students exceeded the target graduation rate; met targets for English learner progress, science achievement, and growth in math; and exceeded the target for advanced coursework completion. The district saw little progress in high school students' performance on English language arts and math achievement, as well as worsening chronic absenteeism rates, and an increase in the annual dropout rate. In grades 3-8, there was minimal evidence of English learner progress toward English language proficiency.

Thirteen BPS schools did not have sufficient data to calculate an accountability percentile or designation. These schools are primarily early education centers or schools serving specialized populations. Additionally, six schools in BPS are considered Horace Mann Charter Schools whose data is reflected separately from the district.

Ms. Robinson expressed concern about the lack of progress among schools designated in need of broad and comprehensive support. Mr. Harris said that district leaders must help school leaders build their capacity as instructional leaders and provide students with cognitively demanding tasks. Ms. Robinson questioned the impact of grants and professional development and called for a sense of urgency to improve chronically underperforming schools.

Mr. O'Neill encouraged district leaders to cross-reference the list of underperforming schools with the budget allocations and enrollment in recent years. He expressed concern about the uptick in the dropout rate and absenteeism, which is considered an early warning indicator. Dr. Grandson discussed action steps, including efforts to unify the BPS curriculum, explaining that data shows that districts with a centralized curriculum yield better results. The Superintendent said that she will present a comprehensive, centralized curriculum plan in the near future to provide better coherence across schools. Mr. O'Neill encouraged the Superintendent to include the ISEE exam in her review.

Ms. Robinson noted that BPS has been designated by the state as making substantial progress toward targets with a target percentage of 56%. Ms. Dillman discussed the challenges that BPS faces when there are delays in receiving targets from the state. Dr. Grandson emphasized the importance aligning curriculum with the standards.

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The Superintendent commented that while standardized tests provide a good systems check, they don't necessarily demonstrate student progress, adding that she is troubled by high stakes testing. Mr. Loconto closed the conversation by encouraging the Superintendent and her team to examine its strategies for closing the achievement gaps that are evident in the results.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Peggy Wiesenberg, Access to Justice Fellow, testified regarding the Student Opportunity Act. She expressed concern about the potential for state officials to reduce local autonomy. Opportunity gap plans.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. O'Neill and Ms. Robinson spoke enthusiastically about their sail aboard the USS Constitution with K-12 educators on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Mr. O'Neill praised the work of Natacha Scott, BPS Director of History and Social Studies, for helping students view the city as a classroom, and thanked the U.S.S. Constitution Museum for providing the opportunity.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 9:17 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary